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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: SULTAN'S ANNUAL ADDRESS

REF: 04 MUSCAT 1957

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Summary  
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1. (SBU) Sultan Qaboos' October 1 annual address to the Majlis Oman, lasting under 15 minutes, focused almost entirely on the human resource development, making only a brief reference to foreign affairs and offering little in the way of new initiatives or reforms. Popular hopes that long-unchanged government salaries might receive a boost were disappointed. End summary.

2. (U) By long-standing tradition, Sultan Qaboos addressed on October 1 the two houses of parliament known collectively as the Majlis Oman. Government ministers, resident ambassadors, royal family members, senior military and police commanders, and newspaper editors-in-chief were also in attendance. The full text of the speech is in para six.

3. (SBU) In his speech last year (reftel), the Sultan covered both broad domestic and international themes while also focusing on specific issues, such as the newly formed Ministry of Tourism and his hopes for Palestine and Iraq. By contrast, this year's speech focused on the government's concern for developing human resources, both through basic education and job training. The Sultan noted that the government strives to provide vocational training for the economically disadvantaged, and encouraged Omanis who find work in the private sector to remain in their jobs so as not to undermine private sector confidence in the "Omanization" of the workforce. Notably absent was any indication of a possible increase in government salaries, which have been stagnant for many years despite widespread indications this year of rising prices for basic foodstuffs and energy.

4. (SBU) In his brief mention of foreign policy, the Sultan reiterated familiar themes regarding adherence to international commitments and pursuing a policy of non-interference, but made no mention of any other country by name. There was also no reference to the arrests and trials earlier in the year of several dozen Ibadhi citizens accused of seeking to overthrow the state, but the Sultan extolled Oman's "culture of tolerance" while saluting the country's "alert security services."

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Comment  
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5. (SBU) This speech did not indicate which particular emphasis could be expected during the next budget cycle, as we saw with 2004's focus on developing tourism, which accordingly witnessed dramatic investment in the past year. By making no reference to any foreign state or international body, as he helpfully did with Iraq in 2004, the Sultan also passed up an opportunity for Oman to register its subtle interest or concern on a given issue -- such as Iran's dealings with the IAEA, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, and the approaching referendum in Iraq. It is less surprising that the Sultan was mum about government salaries, though popular expectations may rise again during the impending Ramadan season and with the January announcement of the 2006 state budget.

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The Full Text  
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6. (U) The complete text of the Sultan's address to the Majlis Oman, as provided in English by the Oman News Agency, is below. (Begin text)

Praise be to God who has bestowed His grace and given his bounty. Praise be to God who has predetermined and guided, and may blessings and peace be upon the chosen Prophet.

Dear citizens,

As we celebrate the march of our blessed Renaissance, with God's will, we recall the achievements made in various

spheres in this blessed land which were aimed at realizing one noble goal - the building of the modern Omani who has faith in God, preserves his identity, keeps abreast of up-to-date techniques, science, culture and arts, who takes advantage of the bounty of modern civilization in order to build his country and develop his society.

At the same time, we reaffirm our resolve to continue to work for more progress in the field of development and construction, prosperity, security and stability, with God's help.

The previous period has witnessed, through the implementation of various plans and programs, the accomplishment of the goals of the blessed Renaissance which we have always set our sights on since the first day it dawned.

They are inspired by four fundamental principles, which are:  
1. The development of human resources; 2. The development of natural resources; 3. The building of the infrastructure; 4. The establishment of the state institutions.

Praise be to God, during the comprehensive development march and with determination, diligence, patience and persistence, many achievements have been possible in each of these areas in which we take pride, particularly in the field of the development of human resources.

We did and still do firmly believe that the development of these resources is the cornerstone of the development process in any society because the human being as we have always stressed on different occasions is the ultimate goal and aim of development as well as being its means and its producer.

As long as society succeeds in raising, developing, qualifying, training, enhancing skills and diversifying the experience of its human resources, success is guaranteed in building a modern state with progress in all aspects of life.

We thank God the Almighty for granting us success in spreading education to all levels and in all its many branches, accompanied by training programs which are provided by the government and private educational institutions to which the government sends our sons and daughters to qualify in different specializations. This has provided them with greater and more opportunities to acquire knowledge and practical training, which in turn has prepared them to enter the labor market and to contribute to the building of society.

In this respect, we would like to point out that the government has made great efforts over the previous period to provide opportunities for the qualification and training of Omani youths, boys and girls.

However, we have observed through our continuous follow-up and monitoring of the successive stages of social development that some members of society who are financially incapable of qualifying themselves and developing skills to avail themselves of suitable job opportunities.

Thus, it has become necessary to assist them to obtain the qualifications and training they need.

We therefore instruct our government to set up a suitable mechanism through which assistance can be provided to this sector enabling them to obtain useful occupations. Thereby God willing, they can benefit from the job opportunities that are available.

We would like to reiterate that in order to realize our hopes and aspirations and for our plans and programs to succeed, cooperation is imperative between all of our citizens, led by the private sector and the various organs and departments of the government, in order to carry out these plans and future programs in a spirit of responsibility and awareness.

Such cooperation would yield more progress, advancement, growth and prosperity. We are very pleased with the sincere desire demonstrated by the private sector to provide job opportunities for citizens and we call on it to intensify its initiative in this regard.

We also urge Omani youth, both male and female, to take advantage of these opportunities and endeavor to settle and stay in an available job in order to gain experience and skills that will be of mutual benefit, and in the public interest.

This will prove that the Omani worker is serious, dedicated, punctual and capable of shouldering responsibilities. Only through this the Omanization policies and plans will bear fruit, God willing.

Dear citizens,

The road is long and the goal is far. However, we are

confident that this dear country has the necessary cultural and historical elements, and hopes and aspirations for the future, that will enable it, God willing, to implement its domestic and foreign policies, and the principles of which are now clearly defined, praise be to God. We believe that non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, respect of charters and conventions, and compliance with international law will, without doubt, lead the world to a more harmonious state which safeguards the interests of all nations.

It is something that we have always called for through dissemination of the culture of tolerance, peace, cooperation and understanding between all nations. We also hope that this will lead to the eradication of many causes behind violence and instability.  
Dear citizens,

To conclude, we would like to salute and extend our greetings and appreciation to our gallant armed forces and alert security services for their efforts and dedication in carrying out their assigned duties, affirming that we will continue to extend our care and attention to them.

We pray for the Almighty's assistance to make our renaissance a success.

May God bless you and may peace be upon you, and the mercy of God and His blessings. (End text)  
BALTIMORE